

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BERN 06016 221712Z

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5472

C O N F I D E N T I A L BERN 6016

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINR SZ

SUBJECT: BIOGRAPHIC DATA: NEW FEDERAL COUNCILOR FRITZ HONEGGER

1. FRITZ HONEGGER WAS ELECTED TO SWISS FEDERAL COUNCIL DEC 7, 1977 AND BECOMES CHIEF OF DEPT OF PUBLIC ECONOMY IN JAN 1978, REPLACING ERNST BRUGGER WHO RESIGNED. HE RECEIVED 173 VOTES OUT OF 244 CAST IN JOINT SESSION OF SWISS PARLIAMENT. HONEGGER HAD REFUSED HIS PARTY'S CALL TO BE A FEDERAL COUNCILOR IN 1969 IN ORDER REMAIN CLOSE TO HIS SONS WHO WERE ATTENDING SCHOOL IN ZURICH, AND BRUGGER TOOK JOB. FROM 1967 TO 1977 HONEGGER SERVED AS A MEMBER OF COUNCIL OF STATES. IN 1974 HE WAS ELECTED PRESIDENT OF LIBERAL-DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF SWITZERLAND.

2. EARLY LIFE AND CAREER: BORN IN BISCHOFZELL, ST. GALLEN CANTON, ON JULY 25, 1917, HONEGGER ATTENDED UNIVERSITY IN GRENOBLE AND ZURICH, FROM WHICH HE RECEIVED DOCTORATE IN ECONOMICS IN 1942. HE WAS SECY OF SEMI-OFFICIAL SWISS WATCH CHAMBER FROM 1942 TO 1944 AND SECY OF ZURICH SILK INDUSTRY SOCIETY FROM 1944 TO 1961. HE BECAME EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ZURICH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE IN 1961.

3. AN OUTSPOKEN ADVOCATE OF FREE ENTERPRISE, HE HAS BEEN DIRECTOR OF SEVERAL CORPORATIONS, AND WAS
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PAGE 02 BERN 06016 221712Z

PRESIDENT OF AIRPORT REAL ESTATE COMPANY (FIG), A PUBLIC-PRIVATE COOPERATIVE ORGANIZATION FOR CONSTRUCTION AND ADMINISTRATION OF AIRPORT BUILDINGS.

4. HIS POLITICAL CAREER BEGAN AS PRESIDENT OF COMMUNE OF RUESCHLIKON. IN 1957 HE WAS ELECTED TO CANTONAL COUNCIL OF ZURICH, SERVING AS ITS PRESIDENT DURING

1965/66 SESSION. ALTHOUGH AN ECONOMIST BY TRAINING, HE DEMONSTRATED AN INTEREST IN AND TALENT FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE ACTIVITIES IN HIS CAPACITY AS CANTONAL COUNCILMAN.

5. AS A POLITICIAN, HONEGGER HAS A REPUTATION FOR BEING STRAIGHT FORWARD THOUGH NOT PUSHY. CALM IN TEMPERAMENT AND NOT GIVEN TO RHETORICAL FIREWORKS, HE HAS ABILITY FIND SOLUTIONS TO COMPLEX PROBLEMS.

6. PERSONAL DATA: A COLONEL IN SWISS NATL MILITIA, HONEGGER IS AN ENTHUSIASTIC SKIER AND HIKER. HE IS MARRIED TO FORMER LUCIENNE JACOT WHOM HE MET WHEN SHE EMPLOYED AT SWISS WATCH CHAMBER IN LA CHAUX-DE FONDS. THEY HAVE TWO SONS, DR. ERIC HONEGGER (31) AND CLAUDE (25). YOUNGER SON LIVES AT HOME WITH PARENTS AND BOTH SONS ARE ACTIVE MEMBERS OF RADICAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY. MRS. HONEGGER'S INTERESTS INCLUDE FRENCH LITERATURE, PIANO, AND PHOTOGRAPHY. HONEGGER SPEAKS GERMAN, FRENCH, ITALIAN AND LIMITED ENGLISH. WARNER

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